

1975

Artist

George Oppen

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Ghazal / Philip Dow

Coming to him from its fumbled audition for the head of a pin,
the poem said: *I am your promise. What do you keep?*

His muse. Played the piano as if it were borne up at six points
by midgets dressed in money.

Get it right this time.

What am I supposed to feel?

Holding that still waters run deep
they, too, stagnated.

The present arrived, at a pat on the cheek,
offering a revolver or a barrel of whiskey.

Ghazal / Philip Dow

Daybreak. A ripple vee-ing across still water:
nothing's errant wake.

Minnows aquiver in the heron's eye.
And I, how can I understand love's angry tongue?

Hurt, like ritual. Performing duty beyond the need.
As if that was enough, as it sometimes is all there is.

The milkyway had seemed one endless track—
but then, but then.

Between those brightened splotches of his trail
doesn't the snail polish the air we breathe?

Artist / George Oppen

he breaks the silence
and yet he hesitates, half unwilling

something comes into his mind
it is something about something

the sea

to ask
where is the sea he asks

where is the shore
he fears as the devil

himself his
cleverness

we move, we move, the mass of the people
moves is he trying to escape? to enter?

The Law of Poetry / George Oppen

rooted in the most unconscionable romance,
the words the thought the form and the music
for one's own sake: from this law is born the
law *and* the prophets. Or more simply.

“Something grazes our hair . . .” / S. J. Marks

Something grazes our hair, gets
tangled in it
and leaves,

The last light welds itself to the hand.
The light of the shadow is its milky darkness,
the light on the moon like a skin.

There are silences in the heart,
a hand
with its fingers curled up
in the palm.
And a tree. I break off
a small branch,
I touch the jagged edges
and my fingers itch.

I feel your hands in my sleep, soothing me,
trying to find out who I am.
They're taking apart something without me,
something so human
I can't even remember the dream it became
when I wake,